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ABSTRACT

This monograph offers a series of questions which are intended to serve as a framework for investigating the status of arts education programs within elementary and secondary schools. It is intended as an aid to parents, educators, and other interested citizens as they evaluate and/or seek to improve arts education programs. The questions are accompanied by comments which serve as general guides to the kinds of answers one might expect and to areas in which additional information might be elicited. The document is presented in 11 major sections. Section one characterizes the type of individual for whom the self-assessment questions are particularly relevant. These individuals include parents of artistically gifted children, parents of students with special needs, representatives of local cultural organizations, civic leaders, and a member of a board of education faced with budget cuts. Sections two through ten are organized around the following questions: "Is there a formal school board policy or set of goals concerning the arts?" "How are the arts reflected in the school budget?" "How strong is the arts program in the elementary and secondary schools?" "Are there arts programs for students with special needs and interests?" "How are the arts integrated into the regular academic program?" "Does the district provide staff inservice programs in the arts?" "Do school arts programs involve the community?" and "Does the district have a comprehensive program in the arts?" The final section offers a check list for evaluating an arts program. These include faculty expressions of hope for program improvement, parental input, the amount of staff development throughout the district, and the degree of commitment to the arts among school board members and principals. (DB)

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Your school district and the arts: a self-assessment

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A series of reports from The Arts, Education, and Americans, Inc. 2

FOREWORD

Despite the unprecedented flourishing of the arts in America today, arts programs in the nation's schools have not experienced a corresponding expansion. In fact, with nationwide public attention focused on such problems as declining enrollment, vandalism, low test scores, and spiraling inflation, budgetary priorities are dictating the reduction of school arts programs. In some school districts, arts programs are being eliminated entirely.

We believe that school arts programs are *basic* to individual development and a sound education. Further, we believe that the arts should be used to stimulate learning and self-expression, and recognized as valid ways to learn. If school arts programs are to continue and expand, they require the support of educators, school board members, parents, artists, arts administrators, students, community leaders, legislators, and government agencies.

The Arts, Education, and Americans, Inc. (AEA) has established a National Advocacy Program for Arts in Education addressed to these groups of individual advocates. AEA is a national organization formed in 1977 following the publication of *Coming To Our Senses*, the Report of the National Panel on The Arts, Education, and Americans, David Rockefeller, Jr., Chairman.

The AEA Advocacy Program, which encourages the cooperative action of these groups to ensure local level support for school arts programs, includes a public awareness campaign and consumer information service. The service provides Advocacy Program enrollees with a variety of arts in education information–the AEA newsletter, access to the AEA speaker referral service, informal consultation, and monographs that address pertinent arts in education issues and topics.

This monograph, part of an ongoing series, speaks to one or more of the aforementioned school arts support groups. While we recognize that few monographs will speak directly to everyone, we attempt in each to address a variety of individuals. We hope this monograph will prove helpful to you in your support of arts in education. If you are not yet enrolled in the AEA National Advocacy Program and would like to do so, write to:

The Arts, Education, and Americans, Inc.
Box 5297, Grand Central Station
New York, New York 10163

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With grateful appreciation, we wish to thank the following organizations for helping to make possible AEA's National Advocacy Program for Arts in Education and, as part of that program, the ongoing monograph series: the National Endowment for the Arts, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Alcoa Foundation.

AEA's Board of Directors and Advocacy Advisory Group provided insight on the shaping of the Advocacy Program, and the Advisory Group in particular spent many hours reviewing monograph outlines and drafts.

The Advocacy Program is coordinated by Educational Facilities Laboratories, a division of the Academy for Educational Development. AED Senior Vice President and EFL Division Director Alan C. Green serves as Project Administrator. EFL's Nancy Morison Ambler is Project Director and editor of the monograph series Deborah C. Creighton was responsible for editorial and photo research for this monograph.

We acknowledge with gratitude the hundreds of artists, arts administrators, community leaders, educators, federal, state, and local government administrators, parents, and school board members who continue to share with us their knowledge and myriad of experiences in the realm of school arts programs. Without their patient and detailed explanations of how their own programs are designed, managed, and expanded–without their special vignettes about these programs–we would be unable to produce the monographs.

Finally, an important word of thanks goes to Junius Eddy, author of *A Self-Assessment*. Mr. Eddy brings to this project a variety of special credentials–former university theatre professor; television playwright; film writer; education journalist; former school board member; and arts education consultant for numerous foundations, school districts, government agencies, colleges and universities, and arts councils. Mr. Eddy now lives on Rhode Island's Narragansett Bay.

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Your school district and the arts: a self-assessment

You care about the arts in your school district

☐ You and your family are moving to another section of the country. You have children of public school age and you hope to resettle in a community where the school system has a strong program in the creative and performing arts–and the taxpaying public supports it. What specifically do you look for when you visit schools in that area?

☐ A school operating levy has been defeated for the second time in your district and the board of education is considering selective budget cuts that would affect arts programs. On what basis do you make judgments about the soundness of such an action–relative to other elements of the school program–and determine its ultimate impact on arts programs districtwide?

☐ As a local citizen leader, you have been asked to serve on a districtwide Arts Education Study Committee established to survey the status of the arts in your schools and recommend improvement to the board of education. What are some characteristics of a good school arts program for which committee members should be on the lookout?

☐ As a representative of a local cultural organization, you have returned from a regional conference held to consider the place of the arts in U.S. education. You are neither a professional artist nor a professional educator, but the conference theme has started you wondering about the arts program in your own school system. How do you go about checking on the health of the arts in your schools?

☐ One of your children appears to possess an unusual degree of talent in one or more art forms. How can you determine whether the public schools offer programs of sufficient quality and range to challenge and nurture those unique gifts?

Toward better informed citizen advocates

Fifteen to twenty years ago, these would have been among the *last* questions on the minds of parents or civic leaders when they examined quality education in their schools. Although local citizens were demanding a greater voice in their children's public education, seldom were those voices raised specifically on behalf of programs involving the arts.

Not so today. As we enter the 1980s, conferences concerned with arts education seem to be the order of the day. Under the aegis of one national advocacy group or another, a majority of states and a growing number of localities have established task forces to undertake comprehensive arts education planning. And, at both state and local levels, people who care about the arts in American life are taking their concerns directly into the educational arena and voicing them to legislators, school board members, and professional educators.

Yet, in the face of these heartening developments, it is clear that the struggle to establish a legitimate and recognized place for the arts in the educational sun will be long and costly. Many of the movement's most eloquent spokespersons believe that the real engagement has only just begun.

Elliot Eisner, professor of education and art at Stanford University and the immediate past president of the National Art Education Association (NAEA), puts it bluntly: "As long as the arts are considered areas of enrichment in the curriculum, they will be viewed as marginal niceties–good-time friends, but when the chips are down, they will be among the first to go."

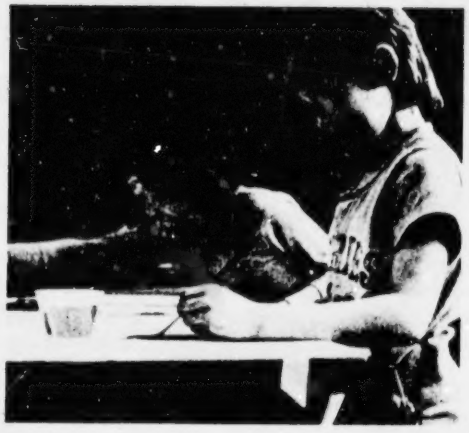
Indeed, that exodus already is in progress. Under the double-barreled pressures of rising inflation and declining enrollment, many schools are systematically eliminating art and music specialists and otherwise curtailing their arts programs. Caught in this dilemma, what can conscientious educators do? More to the point, as citizen believers in this cause, what can we do to act on those beliefs? We clearly have our work cut out for us. One of the more immediate things we can do is become better-informed advocates by honing our advocacy tools to a fine persuasive edge.

The purpose of this monograph is simple: to give those who care about education *and* the arts some suggestions for checking on the health of the arts in your own school system–be it rural, county, suburban, or big city.

Where to begin

The questions that follow include most of the information-gathering essentials. They are questions you will want to pose to people familiar with your district and its programs–not only to specialists, classroom teachers, and administrators, but also to school board members, parents, artists working in the schools, researchers, evaluators, classroom aides, and students.

Your local community arts agency–there are some 2,000 such agencies around the country–is a good place to start making inquiries. Many of their programs relate to education, and their staff members usually are knowledgeable about the state of the arts in local schools. The same is true of the education staffs of museums and other cultural institutions.



Under each question we have provided comments that may help you put into perspective the answers you receive. You should bear in mind that our comments have to consist of generalizations, if only because no two school systems are precisely similar, and there are differences of opinion about what makes for quality arts programs.

The most difficult systems to study are the large systems. These often are the big city systems, although a number of suburban systems are large (with enrollments of 50–100,000 students). In systems of this size, it will be difficult to glean adequate information from top administrators. Your neighborhood elementary, junior high (or middle school), or high school may, therefore, be the logical place to start.

You cannot generalize too far from what you find in that one building, but you can

get some clues about the districtwide scene from those you speak with there. Ask what they know of the *rest* of the system and whether the situation in their building is typical of others at the same educational level throughout the district. Art and music specialists often have an insight into the activities of their counterparts elsewhere in the system, but it is the middle-level administrators (supervisors, curriculum specialists, subject matter coordinators) in these larger systems who are most likely to possess current *systemwide* information about the arts.

Probably those of you living in medium-sized suburban districts will have the least difficulty when it comes to information-gathering. Again, it will be the middle-level administrators who probably will have at their fingertips the information you seek. Most districts, regardless of size, will have printed material that should be useful to you: booklets, brochures, program descriptions, curriculum guides, project reports and evaluations, and copies of the school philosophy spelling out educational goals.

It should not surprise you, if you reside in a sparsely populated rural area in which cultural institutions are few, to find that your elementary schools are hard-pressed to provide anything beyond a bare minimum in the way of art or music instruction. However, by virtue of their need to be comprehensive, many large consolidated rural high schools provide a range of courses and extracurricular activities which can be utilized not only by secondary students, but by elementary students and the community at large as well.

We suggest that you consider drawing up a list of questions of your own, using our questions as a framework but adapting them to fit the circumstances unique to your own district.

Is there a formal school board policy, or set of goals, concerning the arts?

Districts that place a high degree of value on the arts frequently will write their arts education objectives firmly into school board policy. These goals may appear as an integral part of the school's basic educational philosophy, in statements setting forth a series of goals or purposes ("the arts stimulate and reinforce problem-solving ability," "the arts are a means of developing creative and flexible forms of thinking," or "the arts help students develop a positive self-image"). Such statements commit the board and staff to programs that address these goals.

On occasion, you will find these beliefs expressed in a separate resolution or board action. Sometimes they may be drawn up as evidence that the district is making a long-term financial and philosophic commitment to an arts education program also funded through state, federal, or private sources. One small suburban system in the midwest adopted this statement in the mid-

1970s: "The broad objective of the comprehensive arts program is to formulate an innovative and functional program of aesthetic education for all instructional levels which will be student-centered and will utilize instructional materials in music, theatre, visual arts and dance–and help the student internalize the cross-discipline relationships."

It would be well to keep in mind a passage by Terry Borton in his book, *Reach, Touch and Teach*, published in 1970 by McGraw-Hill.

There are two sections to almost every school's statement of educational objectives. One is for real and one is for show. The first, the real one, talks about academic excellence, subject mastery, and getting into college or a job. The other discusses the human purpose of school—values, feelings, personal growth, the full and happy life. It is included because everyone knows that it is important, and that it ought to be central to the life of every school. But it is only for show. Everyone knows how little schools have done about it.

Thirty-one state education agencies have adopted policy statements or resolutions supporting arts in education. If your state is one of these, there may well be a statewide mandate urging local districts to take similar action.

How are the arts reflected in the school budget?

This is an area in which you may find the cold, hard data misleading. It is often difficult to determine precisely the amount a school district budgets for the arts because at first glance it may be hidden in other line items. For example, a faculty member who teaches only theatre and drama courses and directs school plays may be listed, for salary purposes, as a member of the English Department. Physical education teachers may provide a good deal of dance and movement instruction. What percentage of their salaries would you assign the arts?

What programmatic strengths exist, but are not *found in the budget?*

Many aspects of a school's arts program are not reflected in the official budget. Perhaps the local Parent-Teacher Association underwrites a cultural enrichment program for students; local artists might provide arts instruction on a volunteer basis; field trips may be scheduled to cultural institutions that admit schoolchildren free of charge; contributions of supplies and equipment may be customary among local merchants or industries–and so on. These resources add up.

You should be on the lookout, too, for new or continuing arts projects that may affect only part of the school program but receive major support from outside funding sources, public or private. An approach that uses the arts to help teach language skills to disadvantaged students could, for instance, appear in the budget simply as "ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act) Title I Program," "ESAA (Emergency School Assistance Act) Title VII Program," or, as one Manhattan district lists it, The Open City Program.

Such developments would indicate not only your district's alertness to and successful pursuit of these funding opportunities; it also would reveal a concern for strengthening aspects of the arts program that otherwise might not receive attention in the regular budget. It *should* mean that the district intends to assume financial responsibility for sustaining such programs when outside support ends. If this proves to be the case, it is a highly positive sign.

Some rough benchmarks: Make of them what you will

We have suggested why it is difficult to measure a district's commitment to the arts on budgetary grounds alone. We offer here some benchmarks that reflect in rough percentages the budgetary allocations of two Midwestern suburban districts widely recognized for the quality of their arts programs. Beginning with the line items for music and art but taking into account other overt and hidden factors, the 1978 arts-support data for both districts was remarkably similar, despite the fact that one enrolled 82,000 students and the other 7,000.

In each case, the budget for the arts (mostly salaries, supplies, and equipment) represented 5-6 percent of the total operating budget, and salaries for all identifiable arts faculty represented about 10-12 percent of total instructional salaries.

How strong is the arts program in the elementary schools?

Despite variations in quality, some vestiges of the visual arts and music are found in most of the nation's elementary schools. The degree of strength one finds in an elementary arts program depends on how much instructional time is devoted to these subjects each week, and who teaches them–specialist or classroom teacher.

Instructional time is a key concern

The professional associations of visual arts and music teachers–the National Art Education Association and the Music Educators National Conference (MENC)–hold that elementary schools should devote at least 90-100 minutes per week to visual arts, and an equal amount of instructional time to general and instrumental music. The MENC also recommends that instrumental music be offered beginning in the fourth grade. Unfortunately, most schools (including many with relatively strong arts programs overall) fall considerably short of this goal. The average, nationwide, is probably closer to 30 minutes a week in both instances.

The amount of instructional time available for visual arts and music is affected by the school's total enrollment and the *number* of art and music specialists assigned to it. It is not uncommon in these tight-budget times to find arts specialists (if they

are present at all) dividing their time between two, and often three, elementary schools, rather than devoting all their time to one. Your district is doing very well by the arts–to start with–if, on the average, each elementary school has full-time specialists in both visual arts and music.

Beyond visual arts and music, what else characterizes a strong elementary arts program?

From this point on, the strength of the elementary arts program will vary considerably, depending on how many of the following elements are present–and with what degree of quality:

☐ The look and *feel* of the building as a whole (murals and student artwork in evidence, well-equipped art and music rooms, arts activities in classrooms);

☐ A professional dancer who offers children creative dance and movement experiences, or a physical education specialist who devotes part of the classtime to dance activities;

☐ The services of a full- or part-time teacher of creative dramatics and improvisational theatre;

☐ The extent to which classroom teachers remain with their students when the children study art and music (arts specialists sometimes seem to be used primarily to release classroom teachers for planning and preparation work, thus effectively isolating the arts teachers from the general learning program of the schools);

☐ The degree to which the arts specialists assigned to a school function as a *team*, and the amount of planning time available for them to develop activities that relate the several art forms one to another;

☐ The extent to which exceptional (handicapped or gifted) children and others with special needs are served by the arts program;

☐ The degree to which classroom teachers and arts specialists are encouraged to plan activities that integrate the arts with other elements of the academic program, such as basic skill development, language arts, and social studies;

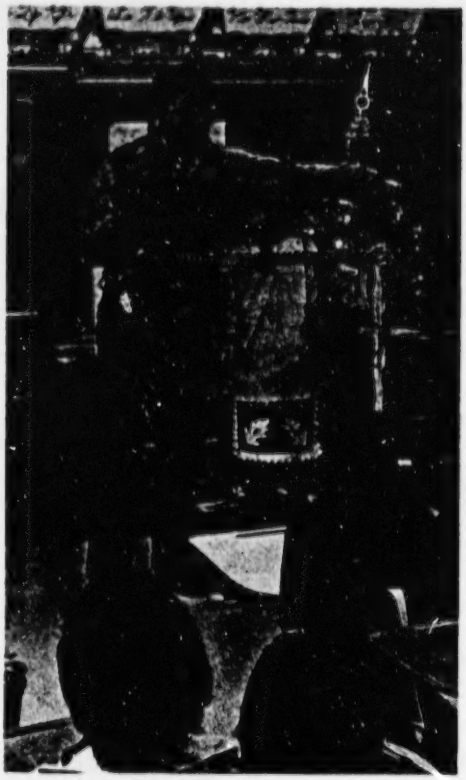
☐ The extent to which the school utilizes community arts resources, including Artists-in-Schools programs and similar approaches that bring professional artists into classroom settings.

How strong is the arts program at the secondary level?

Probably the most important point to bear in mind about secondary school arts programs is that only a very few districts require secondary students to take *any* arts courses. In the mid-1970s, the National Art Education Association estimated that nearly one-fourth of the nation's high schools were not providing opportunities for arts instruction of *any* kind. The result is that hundreds of thousands of high school graduates have not had any significant involvement with the arts during their schooling.

Art requirements in high schools

Occasionally, a high school will require a semester of art and a semester of music, but generally such courses are among the array of elective options available to secondary students. It comes as no surprise that only a small proportion of the student body elects to take arts courses, and most of those who do possess an unusual degree of talent or interest in the arts.



In some districts, of course, the range and quality of arts offerings at the secondary level are attracting ever larger numbers of the general student body–well over a majority in some instances. If this is happening in your district, you can regard it as a sign of the program's strength.

What other elements signal quality in the secondary arts program?

Evidence of quality and strength in a secondary school's arts program, beyond this cluster of electives in music and the visual arts, is difficult to quantify. The following are some of the elements for which you should look.

☐ Separate courses in theatre and drama (acting, stagecraft, directing, and playwrighting) that are not simply units within a traditional English course;

☐ Similar kinds of offerings in dance (perhaps even master classes) separate from the customary physical education courses;

☐ Theatre or dance specialists (or professional artists) hired specifically, if only on a part-time basis, to teach courses in these fields;

☐ A separate department of Performing Arts encompassing the dance, drama, and music curricula;

☐ A strong "performance" schedule, over and above the all-school play and marching band;

☐ Extracurricular clubs for students with special interest in any of the arts, including the literary arts;

☐ A strong program in the media arts, including course work in film, photography, television and radio;

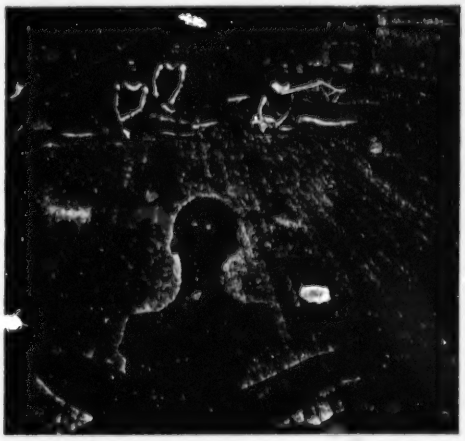
☐ A quality literary magazine that also includes student artwork and photography;

☐ A separate mini-school that may function as a kind of "high school of the arts" within the regular high school;

☐ In larger systems, one or more magnet schools that provide challenging alternative programs in the visual and performing arts;

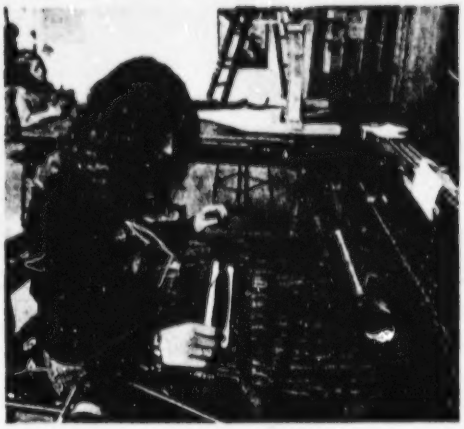
☐ Opportunities for students to work closely with professional artists or become involved with community arts institutions, especially if course credit is available for regular participation;

☐ Planning opportunities that enable faculty members to design and conduct interdisciplinary courses which relate the various art forms not only one to another but also to other academic subjects.



Are there arts programs for students with special needs and interests?

We are concerned here with students who, because they do not fit into the standard mold (or classroom), are termed special or exceptional by developmental psychologists and educators. Such students include the gifted and talented at one end of the human continuum, and the handicapped at the other. (The latter group includes not only students afflicted with mental, psychological, or physical handicaps, but the learning disabled as well.)



What about programs for gifted and talented students?

Although school systems generally have taken their time responding purposefully to the particular needs and interests of artistically gifted children, it would be a sign of strength in your district's arts programs if you find:

☐ In large (and especially urban) districts, one or more secondary schools designated "high schools of the arts" or "arts magnet high schools," which highly talented or motivated students may attend on a part- or full-time basis;

☐ In smaller systems, a mini-school (within the regular high school), focused on the arts, in which students can utilize an enriched core curriculum in the arts, and can take greater advantage of special facilities and community arts resources;

☐ Academic credit awarded gifted students for internships with local arts institutions or apprenticeships with professional artists in the community;

☐ At the elementary level, accredited special-focus schools with an arts-centered curriculum;

☐ Other signs of an arts-enriched program: special courses or classes at advanced levels; opportunities for students to design and pursue independent study programs in the arts; peer teaching by artistically gifted students; an emphasis on experiential learning.

Are there programs for handicapped students?

Particularly since the emergence in 1975 of the National Committee, Arts for the Handicapped, schools gradually have begun to recognize the crucial role of the arts in reaching, motivating, and teaching students with all forms of handicaps. Over

and above evidence of special facilities and equipment, signs of strength to look for in this regard include:

☐ In-service classes for special education teachers, designed to acquaint them with the variety of teaching approaches the arts offer;

☐ Similar opportunites for regular classroom teachers as part of their preparation for mainstreaming some handicapped students;

☐ The use (in regular or special education classrooms) of arts therapists or professional artists with particular aptitudes for working effectively with handicapped or learning-disabled students;

☐ Regular involvement of handicapped students in schoolwide arts events or in special arts festivals of their own.

How are the arts integrated into the regular academic program?

It can be confusing to discover that an "arts in education program" can exist in a district side by side with sound programs in music and the visual arts. Don't the latter programs represent the arts *in* education–and if so, what is the *other* program about?

Although the phrase "arts in education" frequently refers to the entire concept of arts education (as in "the *role* of the arts in education"), it means something quite different when applied to a specific program. In that case, it is derived from the phrase "the arts in *general* education" and refers to approaches that relate one or more art forms to other elements of the academic program.

Such approaches, as noted earlier, cross-cut the curriculum at various levels and

lend additional quality in districts that already have in place specialized art and music programs.

High school interdisciplinary programs

At the high school level, a number of interdisciplinary programs combining one or more art forms with other fields of study (for example, photography with physics or ceramics with chemistry) can be found in various school systems. However, it is not an easy practice to bring about with any consistency (let alone genuine substance). The difficulties stem from the single-discipline teaching loads most faculty members carry, the problems involved in freeing requisite planning time, and the complexities of interdepartmental scheduling.

Are there integrated arts approaches in elementary programs?

Elementary school programs traditionally are built around the generalist classroom teacher, with a complement of specialists to handle subject matter such as art, music, and physical education. Usually these activities are conducted in specially designated rooms, and little attempt is made to bring the work of the specialists teachers into the day-to-day environment of the regular classroom.

When the attempt *is* made, however, and the customary isolation of the arts from everyday learning is broken down, classroom teachers frequently discover that a host of valuable new teaching tools *have* been placed at their disposal.

They find that the educational contributions of the arts go considerably beyond learning *about* art and music (and dance and drama) for their own sake, or providing children with the opportunity of coming to intimate terms with their own creative impulses. They discover, in fact, that the arts serve both motivationally and instrumentally to help children acquire basic reading, writing, and computation skills. And they find, in the teaching of language and social studies in particular, that the arts can illuminate new (and old) ideas, serve as metaphors for concept development, help clarify difficult issues, and develop planning and problem-solving skills, not to mention their all-important function as a means of creative expression and communication.

For the most part, these approaches come about most effectively when specialists and classroom teachers function as a team in planning and carrying out activities that serve their joint purposes. When no specialists are available, or the specialists are somehow cut off from these partnering opportunities, the classroom teacher has to undertake these approaches

alone. Few, however, are sufficiently prepared, either by training or experience, to feel comfortable in meeting this challenge.

When partnerships of this kind allow integrated approaches to take place, it is a sign that the schools are commiting more time, effort, and money to their arts programs than is the case even where good programs in music and art alone are solidly established.

Does the district provide staff in-service programs in the arts?

Among the most valuable tools school systems have for keeping administrators and faculty members up-to-date about developments in their fields is the continuing professional education training practice known as the in-service program. Few school systems today can afford to ignore this fundamental instrument of professional staff development.

What function do they serve?

In-service workshops are built firmly into school operating budgets and designed to meet numerous training or retraining needs; to acquaint the staff with new regulations, requirements, or administrative procedures; to orient teachers to new ways of teaching or to new approaches for teaching standard subject matter; to help them design or become better acquainted with new curriculum materials; and to introduce them to "innovative" programs (generally supported by outside funding and dependent on in-service workshops to make their way effectively into the system).

School systems with strong arts education programs will utilize in-service opportunities that give teachers a chance to learn more about the creative and performing

arts, and discover the extraordinary array of contributions the arts can make to the learning process. In the best of programs, such training is geared to all non-arts faculty. Generally, however, it is aimed at the elementary classroom teacher because this aspect of his or her earlier preparation for the teaching profession often has been seriously neglected.

What teacher education needs are met by these programs?

In-service opportunities in the arts can take any number of forms. They can immerse teachers directly in creative experiences, giving them the opportunity to create art and express themselves *through* it, thus to discover at first hand the value of the creative process to their students. Beyond this, such sessions can help teachers translate these experiences into useful teaching practices. Workshops can demonstrate new instructional tools or different teaching styles; acquaint teachers with the community arts resources available to them; and help them draw on the arts for teaching in other academic areas.

Helping teachers draw on the arts for teaching in other academic areas is an essential element of the in-service program of any school system committed to the *general* education mission of the arts and nurturing the integrated approaches described in the previous section. Indeed, in its most sophisticated form, the in-service program will provide time for specialists to work closely with classroom teachers and administrators on related arts or integrated arts developments. It is unlikely that your district's arts program would move in this direction without building a strong arts component into its in-service program.

Do school arts programs involve the community?

Few school districts in the country today fail to take advantage of community arts resources. In fact, the arts have served as a spearhead for efforts, over the last decade and a half, to bring the schools and their communities into closer working relationships.

Field trips that enable students to visit museums and attend symphony concerts, theatre productions, or dance performances long have been customary in most school systems, particularly those in metropolitan areas. And, increasingly, the flow is moving in the other direction. Traveling art exhibits, touring performance groups, and individual visiting artists frequently are engaged to bring art experiences into school classrooms and assembly halls.

What these resources add to a school's arts program depends, in the end, on its initial strengths. If the school program is minimal, such outside contributions may be of major importance. In other cases, they may fill in some gaps in the program, adding elements of enrichment that only cultural institutions and professional artists themselves can provide. At their most effective level, these resources can add genuine strength only if there is a concerted effort on the part of both the school and the institution to plan and work together.

When school faculties and those education directors of community cultural institutions join forces to plan the event and consider carefully what the student will encounter, following up in appropriate and challenging ways, then arts experiences add genuine strength to the program.

In your search for these elements, keep your eye out for signs of genuine school-community cooperation; evidence that events are planned with concern for sequence and continuity; and that student age levels as well as curricular needs are taken into account. The same elements also should be apparent on an individual level–between teacher and visiting artists as well as between cooperating institutions.

Does the district have a comprehensive program in the arts?

Up to now, we have examined some of the individual characteristics of most strong

and effective school arts programs. Dealing with them individually, however, may have obscured crucial attributes of such programs: a comprehensive approach to planning and development, and coordinated program implementation and management.

The arts program: an interwoven tapestry

In districts which proceed in this manner, the school board and administration should make a concerted attempt to view the arts program in its totality. They should regard it as a carefully interwoven teaching and learning fabric designed to provide appropriate arts experiences for each child from kindergarten to high school.

All of the elements we have examined should be present in the most effective programs. However, your district may not yet be in that category, but heading in that direction. If this is the case, there should be administrative recognition that random

improvements made on a piecemeal basis seldom last, and comprehensive school-community planning incorporating long- and short-term developments is crucial to the emergence of first-rate programs.

A growing operational strategy for improving arts programs is the establishment of a relatively new position at the middle levels of the administrative hierarchy. It is as much a coordinating as a supervisory position, and while art and music supervisors have been the traditional agents, some school systems now are establishing new positions of a more general nature, with titles like Director of Arts Programs or simply Arts Coordinator.

The role of an arts coordinator

The arts coordinator is responsible for all aspects of the school arts program: providing vigorous support to the entire arts staff; guiding the development and effective use of community arts resources; ensuring that the needs of exceptional children are met; planning arts-related in-service programs and securing skilled

workshop leaders to conduct them; and overseeing the entire K-12 arts curriculum, including the relationship of arts to other curriculum areas. Of equal importance, the arts coordinator must be the visible administrative advocate for all matters dealing with the arts program.

In the last analysis, neither the comprehensive program nor the coordinating administrative position is likely to come into existence unless the school system as a whole is committed to a quality arts program. That kind of commitment, in turn, must have its roots in a community which believes in the crucial educational role of the arts, and elects and supports a school board that makes such beliefs a matter of fundamental policy.

A final word

And so we have come full circle, back to the questions of educational policy with which we began.

We hope the questions and accompanying commentary have served to enlighten you about some of the characteristics you will want to look for as you probe the shape, size, and quality of your district's program in the arts. It is unlikely that you will find all of these elements at peak levels of strength in any one school system. More than likely, your district will have its individual weaknesses and strengths.

The main ingredients to look for, in the end, may be the trends and tendencies that characterize the educational climate as a whole:

☐ The hopes people express for better programs;

☐ The extent to which the faculty and supporting staff are accustomed to planning and teaming arrangements;

☐ The kinds of educational concerns you find parents expressing at board meetings or in neighborhood get-togethers;

☐ The sense of budgetary growth you find in the arts, relative to the size of the system as a whole;

☐ The amount of staff development throughout the district;

☐ The degree of commitment to the arts you find school board members and building principals espousing;

☐ The extent to which humanistic educational approaches pervade the school environment as a whole.

These are the kinds of things that could one day bring about the development in your district of a truly comprehensive program of quality arts education.

So now it's up to you.

What *about* your district and the arts? How do you measure up?